

Various Sacramentals

Agnus Dei

At the first year of their pontificates, and every seven years after that, popes traditionally blessed certain discs of wax stamped with the figure of a lamb holding an emblem of the cross. Originally the wax was made of Easter Candles from the previous year and mixed with chrism. More recently pure, white, virgin beeswax was used and merely dipped in water mixed with chrism and balsam at the blessing. Originally the archdeacon and the pope prepared and blessed them Holy Saturday morning. More recently they were prepared by certain monks in advance and then blessed by the Pope. These "consecrated" Agnus Deis were then given to important convents/monasteries and higher ups in the Church to distribute. The last Agnus Dei were consecrated in 1964.

Those sacramentals of them now available are usually from convent or monestary stocks. A chunk is sent to the distributor and they melt a small piece of it as a drop into each locket where it dries and sticks. Or bigger chunks, or even whole discs, are sent in decorated pouches. Any portion, tiny or big, of the wax was of course blessed by a pope with the whole and has the effectiveness of the whole.

Agnus Dei wax has many spiritual benefits and supernatural uses and graces associated with it: It fosters piety, banishes tepidity, preserves from vice and disposes to virtue. It cancels venial sins and purifies from the stain left by grievous sin after it has been remitted in the Sacrament of Penance, it banishes evil spirits, delivers from temptation and preserves from eternal ruin. It is a protection from a sudden and unprovided death. It dispels fears occasioned by evil spirits. It is a protection in combat, and has power to ensure victory. It delivers from poison and from the snares of the wicked. It is an excellent preventative against sickness and is also an efficacious remedy -- especially in cases of epilepsy. It hinders the ravages of pestilence, of epidemics and infectious diseases. It quiets the winds, dissipates hurricanes, calms whirlwinds, and keeps away tempests. It saves from shipwreck and the danger of lightning and floods. It is used by expectant mothers for a safe pregnancy and birth for her and the child.

This prayer may be said by those who wear Agnus Dei wax around their neck or carry it with them: "Jesus, my Savior, true Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, by Thine infinite mercy, I beseech Thee to pardon my iniquities. By Thy sacred Passion, I beseech Thee preserve me this day from sin and shield me from all evil. To Thine honor and glory I carry about with me this blessed Agnus Dei as a protection to my soul and body, and as an incentive to

practice the virtues which Thou hast inculcated, especially meekness, humility, purity and charity. In memory of that sacrifice of love which Thou didst offer for me and all mankind on Calvary, I consecrate my whole being to Thee. Thou didst die on the cross for love of me; let me die to self for love of Thee! Keep me in Thy love and Thy grace to the end of my life, that I may bless Thee forever with the Saints to heaven. Amen."

Holy Water

Holy water is used in our baptism and it has great powers to deter demons. The Lord said come to the fountain all of you who are thirsty, and when His heart was pierced there flowed blood and water. Water is used for washing and for purifying, when it is blessed it works likewise but also in a spiritual manner.

Holy water is a sacramental that remits venial sin. Because of the blessing attached to it, Holy Church strongly urges its use upon Her children, especially when dangers threaten, such as fire, storms, sickness, discord and other calamities. Every Catholic home should always have a supply of Holy Water. Did we realise now, as we shall after death, the many benefits which may be derived from Holy Water, we would use it far more frequently, and with greater faith and reverence.

Holy Water has its great power and efficacy from the prayers of the Church. Following, are some of the petitions the priest makes to God when he blesses water: "O God... grant that this creature of Thine (water) may be endowed with divine grace to drive away devils and to cast out diseases, that whatever in the houses or possessions of the faithful may be sprinkled by this water, so that health which they seek by calling upon Thy Holy Name may be guarded from all assaults."

The devil hates holy water because of its power over him. He cannot long abide in a place or near a person that is often sprinkled with blessed water. Keep a bottle of holy water in you house at all times. It can be found in your church, or specifically blessed in honor of some Saint, perhaps with their relic. Easter Water and Epiphany Water are considered especially powerful.

Holy Water, sprinkled with faith and piety, can move the Sacred Heart to bless your loved ones, present or absent, and protect them from all harm of soul and body. When worry and fear take possession of you, give your dear ones the benefit of the Church's prayer. Its use can also be offered up for the benefit of the Souls in Purgatory.

Although holy water can be any water blessed by a priest, sometimes holy water is specifically drawn from special shrines and holy places in the Christian world. The most famous location for special holy water is Lourdes, but many shrines make holy water available from their fonts, wells, or springs.

Blessed Salt

There is a renewed interest today in the ancient sacramental of blessed salt in the Church. To understand its proper use and its efficacy, it is helpful to review the Scriptural symbolism and its history, since Vatican II urges us to participate "intelligently and actively" in the use of sacramentals, just as in the use of Sacraments.

Salt in the ancient world was a precious commodity. Roman soldiers were partially paid with packets of salt. Being costly, salt was an appropriate offering to God as a "covenant of salt" used in sacrifices by the Israelites, and for the accompanying sacrificial meal. Used for 3500 years to preserve meats from deterioration, it became a symbol of preservation and spiritual incorruptibility that was to characterize anyone offering sacrificial worship. Shared at the sacrificial meal, salt became a symbol of friendship and hospitality, a custom and symbolism still used today in Arab culture.

Jesus referred to this salt symbolized friendship covenant when he said, "Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another." This symbolism is also found in Paul's advice, "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." And we cannot forget Jesus's words to his chosen ones, describing them as the "salt of the earth." He especially indicated that they were to oppose the world's corruption, reminding them that, as salt must preserve its own anti-corruptive quality, they too must preserve their anti-corruptive influence in a sin-corrupted world. The blessing promised by God on food and water in the Old Testament, as well as the prevention of miscarriages and agricultural catastrophes was extended by God through Elisha in Jericho, when he was inspired to put salt into the contaminated water. Adding salt to already brackish water to decontaminate it made the miracle all the more impressive, since one would expect the opposite effect. This first miracle of Elisha is the primary Scriptural basis for the sacramental use of blessed salt today, as the Roman Ritual indicates.

As a Catholic sacramental, salt blessed by the liturgical prayer of a priest may be used by itself, unmixed, as in exorcisms and formerly in the exorcistic prayer at baptism, or it may be mixed with water to make holy water, as the Ritual prescribes (reminiscent of Elisha's miracle). In whichever form, it is intended to be an instrument of grace to preserve one from the corruption of evil occurring as sin sickness, demonic influence, or other manifestation. It draws its efficiency not from any self-contained power, but from the redemptive act of Jesus Christ, the official liturgical blessing power of the Church, and because it focuses one's faith.

Thus used non-superstitiously, modest amounts of salt may be sprinkled in one's bedroom, or across thresholds to prevent burglary, in cars for safety, etc. A few grains in drinking water or used in cooking or as food seasoning often bring astonishing spiritual and

physical benefits. As with the use of Sacraments, much depends on the faith and devotion of the person using salt or any sacramental. This faith must be Jesus-centered, as was the faith of the blind man in the Gospel; he had faith in Jesus, not in the mud and spittle used by Jesus to heal him.

Miraculous Medal

The Medal of the Immaculate Conception, popularly known as the Miraculous Medal, was designed by the Blessed Virgin herself! No wonder, then that it wins such extraordinary graces for those who wear it and pray for Mary's intercession and help.

The story begins on the night of July 18, 1830. A child, perhaps her guardian angel, awakened Sister (now Saint) Catherine Labouré, a novice in the community of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, and summoned her to the chapel. There she met with the Virgin Mary and spoke with her for several hours. During the conversation Mary said to her, "My child, I am going to give you a mission."

Mary gave her this mission in a vision during evening meditation on November 27, 1830. She saw Mary standing on what seemed to be half a globe and holding a golden globe in her hands as if offering it to heaven. On the globe was the word "France," and our Lady explained that the globe represented the whole world, but especially France. The times were difficult in France then, especially for the poor who were unemployed and often refugees from the many wars of the time. France was first to experience many of those troubles which ultimately reached many other parts of the world and are even present today. Streaming from rings Mary's fingers as she held the globe were many rays of light. Mary explained that the rays symbolize the graces she obtains for those who ask for them. However, some of the gems on the rings were dark, and Mary explained that the rays and graces were available but did not come because no one had asked for them.

The vision then changed to show our Lady standing on a globe with her arms now outstretched and with the dazzling rays of light still streaming from her fingers. Framing the figure was an inscription: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

On the front of the medal, Mary is standing upon a globe, crushing the head of a serpent beneath her foot. She stands upon the globe, as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. Her feet crush the serpent to proclaim Satan and all his followers are helpless before her. The year of 1830 on the Miraculous Medal is the year the Blessed Mother gave the design of the Miraculous Medal to Saint Catherine Labouré. The reference to Mary conceived without sin supports the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, not to be confused with the virgin birth of Jesus, and referring to Mary's sinlessness, "full of

grace” and “blessed among women” that was proclaimed 24 years later in 1854.

The vision turned and showed the design of the reverse side of the medal. Twelve stars encircled a large “M” from which arose a cross. Below are two hearts with flames arising from them. One heart is encircled in thorns and the other is pierced by a sword.

The twelve stars can refer to the Apostles, who represent the entire Church as it surrounds Mary. They also recall the vision of Saint John, writer of the Book of Revelation, in which “a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of 12 stars.” The cross can symbolize Christ and our redemption, with the bar under the cross a sign of the earth. The “M” stands for Mary, and the interleaving of her initial and the cross shows Mary’s close involvement with Jesus and our world. In this we see Mary’s part in our salvation and her role as mother of the Church. The two hearts represent the love of Jesus and Mary for us. Then Mary spoke to Catherine: “Have a medal struck upon this model. Those who wear it will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck.” Catherine explained the entire series of apparitions to her confessor, and she worked through him to carry out Mary’s instructions. She did not reveal that she received the Medal until soon before her death 47 years later.

With approval of the Church, the first Medals were made in 1832 and were distributed in Paris. Almost immediately the blessings that Mary had promised began to shower down on those who wore her Medal. The devotion spread like wildfire. Marvels of grace and health, peace and prosperity, following in its wake. Before long people were calling it the “Miraculous” Medal. And in 1836, a Canonical inquiry undertaken at Paris declared the apparitions to be genuine.

There is no superstition, nothing of magic, connected with the Miraculous Medal. The Miraculous Medal is not a “good-luck charm.” Rather, it is a great testimony to faith and the power of trusting prayer. Its greatest miracles are those of patience, forgiveness, repentance, and faith. God uses a Medal, not as a sacrament, but as an agent, an instrument, in bringing to pass certain marvelous results. “The weak things of this earth hath God chosen to confound the strong.”

When our Blessed Mother gave the design of the medal to Saint Catherine Labouré she said, “Now it must be given to the whole world and to every person.”

Various Religious Medals

There is a plethora of medals available that are in honor of various Saints, religious concepts, events, places, and religious associations. They are of a multitude of shapes, sizes, cost, and metals. They are used to inculcate lessons of piety, are specially

blessed to serve as badges of pious associations or to consecrate and protect the wearer, and finally are often enriched with many blessings and graces. They remind us to honor something or someone in our devotion to it, help us gain their intercession, and are a constant reminder to be holy in order to be worthy of carrying the representation of the sacred person or thing.

There are many out there, so many that one cannot even begin to describe them all. However, in a special way, the Four Way Medal should be described as it contains certain major medals all in one. It has the shape of the Cross and on the front, in the four arms of the cross are the front of Scapular Medal, the front of the Miraculous Medal, the St. Joseph Medal, and the St. Christopher medal. There is also a depiction of the Holy Spirit as a dove in the center. On the back are the backs of the Scapular and Miraculous medals, and either the statement "I am a Catholic, Please call a Priest" sort of like a "medical bracelet", or simply a St. Anthony Medal and an Infant Jesus of Prague Medal.

The medal of Our Lady of Olives is well-known throughout the Church and is of French origin. It takes its origin from a wooden statue of Our Lady which survived the destruction of the Church of Murat (Cantal, France) caused by lightning. This event occurred in 1493 and is the beginning of the devotion to Our Lady of the Olives. She is the protectress against lightning. By virtue of the medal of Our Lady of Olives--so goes the tradition--the persons who carry it are preserved from lightning wherever they be during a storm. But there is a second privilege related to the medal of Our Lady of Olives. It protects women who are about to become mothers and assists them in the hour of birth. There is no certitude as to where the name Our Lady of Olives comes from. The most probably explanation being the reference to the wood in which the statue is carved or maybe the allusion to suffering (Garden of Olives) as is, according to another interpretation, visible in the somber hue spreading over the face and body of the statue. Elsewhere the colors of the Virgin are white and blue. At Murat, because of the reference to the Olives--it is believed--the Virgin's mantle is green. Her feast day is celebrated as the first Sunday in September.

There are numerous medals of other Saints too for various causes. Some contain third class relic cloth, or are third class relics themselves. You may wear them around your neck, carry them on your person, or put them in special places to invoke their blessings and graces. Medals are a great way to commemorate, honor, and obtain the blessings and graces associated with various Holy People and Things.

Sacred Heart Badge

Our Lord revealed to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque His wish for

her to order a picture of the image of the Sacred Heart for people specifically to venerate and have in their homes and also small pictures to carry with them. She wrote this to her Superior, Mother Saumaise, on March 2, 1686. Thus was born the devotion of wearing the Badge. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque always kept a badge with her and inspired her novices to do the same. She made many badges and often said this practice was very pleasing to the Sacred Heart.

In the beginning, only nuns of the Visitation were allowed to wear the Badge. It was later spread by Venerable Ana Magdalena Rémuzat, a religious of the Visitation who died in the odor of sanctity (1696-1730). Our Lord told this nun that a serious epidemic would afflict the French city of Marseilles in 1720, and that its inhabitants would receive a marvelous help through this devotion to His Sacred Heart. Mother Rémuzat, helped by her sister in the convent, made thousands of Sacred Heart Badges and distributed them throughout the city where the plague was rampant.

Soon afterward, the epidemic stopped as if by a miracle. Many Badge wearers were not infected and even people who got sick experienced extraordinary help through the Badge. Analogous events happened elsewhere. From then on, use of the badge spread to other cities and countries.

The news of the graces obtained through the Badges reached the Court. Maria Leszcynska, wife of King Louis XV became devoted to the Badge. In 1748 she received several Badges from Pope Benedict XIV as a wedding gift. Among the various presents sent by the Pontiff were "many Badges of the Sacred Heart made of red taffeta and embroidered in gold," the records say.

The French Revolution erupted in France in 1789, causing tragic consequences for the Church and the whole world. True Catholics found protection in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus during that period. Many priests, nobles, and commoners who resisted the bloody anti-Catholic revolution wore the Badge. Even ladies of the Court, like the Princess of Lamballe, wore the Badge embroidered with precious materials over fabric. The simple fact of wearing it became a distinctive sign of those who opposed the French Revolution. Among the belongings of Queen Marie Antoinette, guillotined out of revolutionary hatred, was found a drawing of the Sacred Heart, with the wound, the cross, and crown of thorns, and the inscription: "Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!"

The Chouans, heroic Catholics from Mayenne (western France), who resisted the impious French revolutionaries of 1789, and confronted them with energy and religious ardor, embroidered the Badge of the Sacred Heart on their clothes and banners. They shaped it as a coat of arms to reaffirm their Catholic faith and wore it as a symbolic armor for defense against enemy attacks. Many other Catholic leaders and heroes also wore the Badge as a "spiritual

armor." They fought and died in defense of Holy Mother Church, like the brave peasants who fought under Andreas Hofer (1767-1810), known as the "Chouans from Tyrol." These men wore the Badge as protection in the battles against Napoleon's army that invaded the Tyrol.

The Cristeros in Mexico, in the first half of the 20th century, also wore the Badge. They took up arms against anti-Christian governments that oppressed the Church.

In Spain, the famous Carlista regiments called "requetés," likewise wore the Badge: they were famous for their religious piety and boldness on the battlefield, and their intervention was decisive for the triumph of the anti-Communist Catholics in the Civil War of 1936-1939.

More recently, similar events took place in Cuba. The Catholic Cubans, who fought the Communist regime, had a special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When they were imprisoned and taken to the "parédon" (shooting wall) for summary execution, they faced Fidel Castro's executioners with the cry, "Viva Cristo Rey," Long Live Christ the King!

In 1870 a Roman lady, wishing to know the opinion of the Holy Father Pius IX about the Badge of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, presented him with one. Touched by the sight of this emblem of salvation, the Pope approved the devotion forever and said: "This, Madam, this is an inspiration from Heaven. Yes, from Heaven." After a short moment of silence, he added: "I am going to bless this Heart and want all badges made after this model to receive the same blessing, so that in the future, it will not be necessary for the blessing to be renewed by a priest. And I want Satan to be unable to cause any harm to those who wear this Badge, symbol of the adorable Heart of Jesus."

Wishing to foster the pious habit of wearing the Badge, in 1872, Blessed Pope Pius IX granted one hundred years indulgence who wear this emblem and pray daily one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be. Afterward, the Holy Father composed this beautiful prayer: "Open Thy Sacred Heart, O Jesus! Show me its beauty and unite me with It forever. May the throbbing and all the movements of my heart, even during sleep, be a testimony of my love and tell Thee unceasingly: Yes, Lord Jesus, I adore Thee... accept my poor good actions... grant me the grace of repairing evil done... so that I may praise Thee in time and bless Thee for all eternity."

Blessed Holy Oil

Holy Oil represents strength, sweetness, and spiritual activity. Christians have been anointed since the earliest times with with holy oil in the sacraments, and as a sacramental to remain spiritually strong.

The Church uses three oils in its liturgies: the Oil of

Catechumens at Baptism and Holy Orders, the Holy Chrism (oil mixed with balsam) at Baptism, Confirmation and Episcopal Ordinations, and the Oil of the Sick, used in the Anointing of the Sick. None of these most sacred oils are appropriate for use in the home.

However, there are other oils available that are used as sacramentals. Simple olive oil blessed by a priest is a vehicle for great blessings, protections, healings, graces, and even miracles. Other holy oils are blessed in honor of particular Saints; there are several such blessings in the *Rituale Romanum*. Holy Oils are also typically taken from oil lamps burning at various shrines, or is blessed using one of their relics.

Again, the oil itself has no healing properties, it is the faith of the user and the grace of God that is powerful. The oils may be placed on hurting body parts, or to anoint anyone who is having a problem and trusts in the power of taking advantage of this ancient sacramental.

Blessed Frankincense, Gold, Myrrh, and Chalk for Epiphany

The Church has a custom of blessing homes on the Feast of the Epiphany and the week following. Family and friends gather to ask God's blessing on their homes and those who live in or visit the home. It is an invitation for Jesus to be a daily guest in our home, our comings and goings, our conversations, our work and play, our joys and sorrows. A traditional way of doing this is to use chalk blessed during the Epiphany liturgy and write above the home's entryway, 20 + C + M + B + 13. The letters C, M, B have two meanings. They are the initials of the traditional names of the three magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They also abbreviate the Latin words *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house." The "+" signs represent the cross and 2013 is the year. The Church also blesses on Epiphany small amounts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh in honor of the gifts brought by the Magi to the Infant Jesus.

St. Benedict Medal

The power of St. Benedict is revealed in this small object that has been fostered by his spiritual sons many years. Marvelous is the aid which the St. Benedict Medal affords to its devout wearers in the manifold necessities of soul and body. On this account the Medal is well known and widely used throughout the Christian world; everywhere it is regarded as a highly favored object of devotion.

St. Benedict, born at Nursia, Italy, in 480, had a profound veneration for the holy Cross and for our Saviour Crucified. In virtue of the Sign of the Cross, he wrought many miracles and exercised great power over the spirits of darkness. In consequence of the great veneration in which St. Benedict was held from the early Middle Ages, it followed that a Medal was struck in his honor. This old and powerful

medal has long been regarded as especially efficacious in protecting its wearers against demonic attacks, and securing a number of special graces.

Let us take a closer look at the inscriptions on its two sides. On the front of the medal we find St. Benedict holding a Cross in one hand, and the Rule of St. Benedict in the other. At one of his sides are the words "Crux S. Patris Benedicti," meaning "The Cross of the Holy Father Benedict". And below his feet is often written, "Ex S M Casino MDCCCLXXX," meaning "From the holy Mount of Cassino, 1880". In that year, Monte Cassino was given the exclusive right to produce this medal, and special Jubilee indulgences were added. Still on this front side of the medal we find inscribed in a circle the words: "Ejus in obitu nostro presentia muniamur," Latin for "May his presence protect us in our hour of death". St. Benedict has ever been the patron of the dying, because of the circumstances attending his own most glorious death, for he breathed forth his soul while standing in prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The reverse side of the medal is where the real exorcistic force reveals itself. In the center is a Cross. The Cross, which St. Benedict so loved and often used as a powerful exorcism, is the sign before which the devil cowers. The vertical beam of the Cross bears the letters "C.S.S.M.L." These are the first letters of the words, "Crux Sacra Sit Mihi Lux," meaning "May the Holy Cross be a light unto me." The horizontal beam bears the letters "N.D.S.M.D." These are the first letters of the words, "Non Draco Sit Mihi Dux," meaning, "And may the Dragon never be my guide." The four large letters "C S P B" are inscribed in the angles formed by the Cross. These stand for "Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti," meaning "The Cross of the Holy Father Benedict." In addition, at the top we find the motto "Pax," meaning "peace". Also are inscribed the following letters in a circle around the margin of this side: "V.R.S.N.S.M.V.S.M.Q.L.I.V.B." These stand for the words "Vade Retro Satana; Nunquam Suade Mihi Vana. Sunt Mala Quae Libas; Ipse Venena Bibas!" This is Latin for, "Get behind me, Satan; Never suggest vain thoughts to me. The cup you offer is evil; Drink the poison yourself!"

No special way of carrying or applying the Medal is prescribed. It may be worn about the neck, attached to the scapular or the Rosary, or otherwise carried about one's person. Often it is placed over doors, in the fields, the foundations of buildings, or attached to automobiles to call down God's blessing and the protection of St. Benedict. No particular prayer is prescribed, as the devout wearing itself is a continual silent prayer. The Medal of St. Benedict is one of the Sacramentals of the Church, and as such it must be used. The value and power of the Medal must be ascribed to the merits of Christ Crucified, to the efficacious prayers of St. Benedict, to the blessing of the Church, and especially to the faith and holy disposition of the

person using the Medal.

The following are many pious purposes of the Medal of St. Benedict. It wards off from both the soul and the body all dangers arising from the devil. The Medal is powerful in obtaining for sinners the grace of conversion. It obtains protection and aid for persons tormented by the evil spirit, and in temptations against holy purity. It procures assistance in the hour of death. It has often proved an efficacious remedy for bodily sufferings, and a means of protection against contagious diseases. Expectant mothers have obtained special assistance for a safe delivery. In time of storms, tempests and other dangers on land and sea it has been found to be a protection. Even domestic animals have been visibly aided by it when infected with disease.

This is a prayer to St. Benedict that one may wish to say in his honor: "O glorious St. Benedict, sublime model of all virtues, pure vessel of God's grace! Behold me, humbly kneeling at thy feet. I implore thy loving heart to pray for me before the throne of God. To thee I have recourse in all the dangers which daily surround me. Shield me against my enemies, inspire me to imitate thee in all things. May thy blessing be with me always, so that I may shun whatever God forbids and avoid the occasions of sin. Graciously obtain for me from God those favors and graces of which I stand so much in need, in the trials, miseries and afflictions of life. Thy heart was always so full of love, compassion, and mercy towards those who were afflicted or troubled in any way. Thou didst never dismiss without consolation and assistance any one who had re-course to thee. I therefore invoke thy powerful intercession, in the confident hope that thou wilt hear my prayers and obtain for me the special grace and favor I so earnestly implore (mention it), if it be for the greater glory of God and the welfare of my soul. Help me, O great St. Benedict, to live and die as a faithful child of God, to be ever submissive to His holy will, and to attain the eternal happiness of heaven. Amen."

Cross or Crucifix

The primary symbol of Christianity has long been the Cross, representing the cross on which Christ was crucified. There are many varieties of cross in different shapes and proportions, such as the Tau cross in use among Franciscans, are the variety with three bars used in the East representing, in addition to the cross-beam, the title and the footrest. The Church has blessings for crosses such as those that may be placed in gardens. In whatever shape it takes, the Cross reminds us of Our Lord's Passion.

A crucifix is a representation of the Cross with Jesus actually shown upon it crucified. Catholics have long used this image to remind us of the Passion which Christ suffered for us, and it is widely displayed in churches, homes, and religious jewelry. The Crucifix can

bring great blessings, graces, and protection from sin, harm, and evil spirits. The Processional Crucifix in the Church and the Crucifix above the altar are used in liturgy of the Church.

There are many styles of personal crucifixes available from wall crucifixes for your home, to crucifix necklaces and medals for Catholics to devoutly wear as sacramentals. Some of these have the Stations of the Cross displayed on the back or are richly decorated. The Cross of a Happy Death combines a crucifix with the Medal of Saint Benedict in the middle behind the corpus (body of Jesus). It is a combination that can bring great blessings and graces to the wearer.

The Pardon Crucifix is a lovely and distinct crucifix and is especially highly blessed. The entire title "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum" is written out on it. This is what the "INRI" on a crucifix stands for. It means "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". On the back of the Crucifix, on the transverse arms, are the words, "Father, forgive them." On the long part of the Cross are the words, "Behold this heart which has so loved men." The Sacred Heart is shown where the two arms of the Cross meet.

The Caravaca Cross takes its name from Caravaca (now known as Caravaca de la Cruz), Spain, a town in the province of Murcia where, in A.D. 1231, a priest was imprisoned by the Moors. Out of curiosity, his captors' King, Abu Zeid, asked him to say Mass, but as the priest began, he realized he didn't have the necessary Crucifix. As his captors grew angry, the Patriarch of Jerusalem's pectoral cross was transported to the priest through an open window, borne by two angels. Seeing this, King Abu Zeid converted to the true religion. The Caravaca Cross, then, is the two-armed Lorraine Cross that is used by Archbishops and Patriarchs. Some representations are Crucifixes and may show the angels that carried the Cross, one on each side. The word "Caravaca" may appear on the second arm of the Cross such that "CARA" is on one side, and "VACA" on the other. This is a very popular Crucifix in Spain, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

When Our Lady is said to have appeared at La Salette, she wore a special Crucifix. To the left of the it was a hammer; and to the right a pair of pliers, half open. The hammer represents our power to metaphorically choose to drive the nails into Jesus through sin. The pliers symbolize that through God's grace we may repent. This is now a sacramental used by some in devotion to the La Salette apparitions.

A person may gain graces for carrying on his person, and for devoutly kissing a Crucifix. Many blessings can be obtained. Whoever at the moment of death, fortified by the sacraments, or contrite of heart, in the supposition of being unable to receive them, will kiss the Crucifix and ask pardon of God will gain great graces, blessings, forgiveness, and indulgences.

Relics

Relics are the sacred remains of some holy person, place, thing, or event. Throughout Church history, relics have been carefully preserved and deeply venerated.

They are some object, notably part of the body or clothes, remaining as a memorial of a departed saint. The holy bodies of holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ, whose bodies were the living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit and which are by Him to be raised to eternal life and to be glorified are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these bodies many benefits and miracles are bestowed by God on men. Veneration and honor are due to the relics of the saints, these and other sacred monuments are effectively honored by the faithful, and the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are visited fruitfully by the faithful in view of obtaining their aid.

However, in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition should be removed and all filthy lucre abolished. There were many abuses in the past, including relics being sold and faked. To secure a proper check upon abuses of this kind, the Church cracked down on abuses and instituted.

Relics are mentioned and used in the Bible too. If the clothes, the kerchiefs, or the shadows of the saints, before they departed from this life, banished diseases and restored strength, who will have the hardihood to deny that God wonderfully works the same by the sacred ashes, the bones, and other relics of the saints? This is the lesson we have to learn from that dead body which, having been accidentally let down into the sepulchre of Elisha, when it had touched the bones of the Prophet, instantly came to life. We may add that this as well as the veneration shown to the bones of Moses are demonstration of God working his power through relics.

There are as many noteworthy relics in Church history as there are holy people, things, places, and events so they are too many to even begin to cover. However, we may distinguish between three or four classes of relics. First class relics are the actual remains of a Saint's body or an instrument of Christ's passion. Relics of the True Cross are probably the most famous and powerful of this class. The second class relics are the remains of items of the Saints, or relics of holy places. This is often the Saints clothing, or some sample of the holy place such as oil from the lamp of a shrine, collections of dirt from an area, or chippings of stone from a building. Third class relics are things, usually pieces of cloth, that have been touched to other relics. The touch-relics of the lower class are widely available, including in the form of medals or holy cards with relic cloth included in them.

Little Sachet of the Holy Name

The article of devotion called the Gospel of the Holy Name of Jesus is a sacramental, an object of devotion approved by the Church, and given to the faithful as a help to their union with God, by means of which they may draw down upon themselves His special protection. It was composed by Sister Marie de Saint-Pierre from visions. "For there is no other Name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."

This "Little Sachet" contains a piece of paper on which is an image of the Child Jesus and the Gospel telling of His receiving His Holy Name: "And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised; His Name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before He was conceived in the womb." It may also come with an image of the Sacred Heart with the Instruments of the Passion.

It also contains some aspirations intended to inspire confidence and love. It may be worn on one's person, or carried in some way, but always with faith in the power of the sweet Name of Jesus. The efficacy of a sacramental depends, to a great extent, on the interior dispositions of the one using it. We use a sacramental in a spirit of faith.

Our Lord, Himself, teaches us to invoke His Holy Name: "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My Name, shall be given to you." St. Paul says: "Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved." The victory gained over the demons by Our Lord was expressed by His Name JESUS, which means Saviour.

Our Lord is pleased to manifest the power of His Holy Name by many other spiritual and temporal favors, such as conversions, cures, etc. The devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus is attached to that of the Reparation of Blasphemies and to that of the Holy Face. In honor of the five letters of the Name of Jesus, and through the virtue of His Five Wounds, Our Lord has promised to grant five special graces to those who embrace this devotion with faith and piety. They are:

1. He will preserve them from lightning.
2. From the snares and malice of the demon.
3. From a sudden and unprovided death.
4. He will make them walk with facility in the path of virtue.
5. He will grant them final perseverance.

St. Anthony Brief

In the 13th century, a Portugese woman who'd been demonically oppressed resolved to do the unthinkable by taking her own life by

drowning herself in the Tagus River. On her way to the river, she passed a shrine erected in honor of the great orator and miracle-worker, St. Anthony of Padua. She stopped to pray, one last time. As she prayed, she saw St. Anthony standing before her, saying, "Arise woman, and take this paper, which will free you from the molestations of the Evil One." Then he gave her a parchment inscribed with what is now known as the "Brief (i.e., "Letter") of St. Anthony," and she was now free from demonic oppression and the desire to do away with herself.

News of this miracle spread, even to the King who asked the woman for the Brief. He placed it with the Crown Jewels of Portugal, which was fine for the King, but bad for the woman. After the Brief was no longer with her, she began to weaken and lapse, so the King made a copy for her that restored her to her healed state. Other copies of the Brief were spread to help the faithful fight the Evil One and remind them that Christ has conquered.

The Brief consists of a depiction of a Cross, and words which, forming a rhyme in the Latin, harken back to Apocalypse 5:5, "And one of the ancients said to me: Weep not: behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof." The words of St. Anthony's Brief are:

Ecce Crucem Domine,
Fugite, partes adversae,
Vicit Leo de Tribu Juda,
Radix David, alleluia.

English version:

Behold the Cross of the Lord!
Flee ye adversaries!
The Lion of the Tribe of Juda,
The Root of David has conquered, alleluia!

The exorcizing proclamation is carried on the person or placed in homes. It is also used in more specific situations, such as that encountered by the French seamen who found their ship tossed by an angry sea during a storm off Brittany's coast in 1708. One of the men wrote the words of St. Anthony's Brief, and threw it into the sea with a prayer to the Saint. Immediately, the seas calmed and the sailors were saved. The words of this Brief are good ones to use when feeling tempted by evil, oppressed by demons, and in general spiritual warfare.

Holy Cards

Holy cards offer comfort, consolation, and encouragement to Catholics, who often carry these portable images of their favorite

saints with them and use them in daily prayer. Given as remembrances at wakes and funerals, communions and confirmations, holy cards are also a widely popular-and highly collectible-form of folk art. Prophets and angels, disciples and evangelists, martyrs and hermits, visionaries and mystics are among the religious figures in Catholicism represented. Holy Cards are a distinctive part of the Catholic "visual culture" -- inexpensive images that we use as bookmarks and keepsakes, tuck into picture frames, slip inside Christmas and greeting cards, keep in our wallets, give to our Godchildren and those we sponsor into the Church for their special occasions.

Catholics keep Holy Cards with relevant prayers and images on them to hand out to friends who are going through a hard time, and order special funeral cards ("memorial cards") inscribed with the name and dates of birth and death of the dead person. Nowadays, one can buy customized holy cards inscribed with personal names and dates as keepsakes for Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, etc. In Catholic culture, holy cards are ubiquitous and have been for a long time.

The earliest holy card -- a wood block print of St. Christopher -- dates to 1423. In that century, hand-cut and die-cut paper lace holy cards became extremely popular and were known as *dévotés dentelles* in France, and as *Andachtsbilden* in Germany. Modern holy cards developed when a German, Aloys Senefelder (1771-1834), developed lithography, an inexpensive way of multiplying graphics.

In the 1840s, French companies in Paris in the area of the Church of St. Sulpice began mass-producing holy cards with designs characterized by soft and feminine-looking images, a style that became known as "St. Sulpice Art" ("l'art St. Sulpice"). While many of these cards were sold in America, other companies, such as Carl Benziger and Sons (later the Benziger Brothers), a Swiss company in operation since 1792, opened branches in America. Nowadays, the best and most commonly-seen holy cards are produced by the Bonella Brothers company, based in Milan, Italy. You can now buy paper cards, laminated cards (they last much longer), cards imprinted with traditional art and icons, and tacky modern-looking cards. They generally cost between 30¢ and \$2.00 and can be bought at most Catholic bookstores and giftshops.

Prayer Cloths

In Acts 19:11-12, it speaks of how cloths (aprons and handkerchiefs) were touched to Peter and Paul and taken back to the sick who were often cured of their ills. It says that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Prayer

cloths are sacramentals. In many places, the custom exists to place the prayer cloth on a special table and to place petitions on the cloth as well as pictures of our loved ones and those in need of spiritual or physical healing. The prayer cloth may also be placed directly on the sick person or held while praying. Prayer cloths can be used for the dying, the ill, the aged, the lonely and fearful, cures of all kinds, conversions, consolations of soul and body, family difficulties, burials, calamities, special occasions, and devotional praying.

Letter of the Oration

A sacramental and devotion for Consecrating the Drops of Blood which Our Lord Jesus lost on His way to Calvary. At the end is a Copy of this Letter of the Oration found in the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, preserved in a silver box by His Holiness and by the Emperors and Empresses of the Christian Faith.

St. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, with St. Matilda and St. Bridget, wishing to know something of the Passion of Jesus Christ, offered fervent and special prayers, upon which there appeared to them Our Lord Jesus Christ who spoke to them in the following manner: "I descended from Heaven to the Earth in order to convert you. If olden times people were religious and their harvests were abundant; at present, on the contrary, they are scanty. If you want to reap an abundant harvest you must not work on Sunday, for on Sunday you must go to Church and pray to God to forgive your sins. He gave you six days in which to work and one for rest and devotion and to tender your help to the poor and assist in the Church. Those people, who brawl against my religion and cast slurs on this Sacred Letter, shall be forsaken by Me. On the contrary, those people who shall carry a copy of this letter with them shall be free from death by drowning and sudden death. They shall be free from all contagious diseases and lightening; they shall not die without confession, and shall be free from their enemies and from the hand of wrongful authority, and from all their slanderers and false witnesses. Women in peril at child-birth will, by keeping this Oration about them, immediately overcome the difficulty. In the houses where this Oration is kept, no evil thing will ever happen: and forty days before the death of a person who has this Oration about him or her, the Blessed Virgin will appear to him or her." So said St. Gregorius.

To all those faithful who shall recite for 3 years, each day 2 Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory Be's, in honour of the drops of blood I lost, I will concede the following 5 graces:

1. The plenary indulgence and remittance of your sins.
2. You will be free from the pains of Purgatory.
3. If you should die before completing the said 3 years, for you it will be the same as if you had completed them.

4. It will be upon your death the same as if you had shed all your blood for the Holy Faith.
5. I will descend from Heaven to take your soul and that of your relatives, until the fourth generation.

"Be it known that the number of armed soldiers were 150; those who trailed me while I was bound were 23. The executioners were 83; the blows received on my head were 150; those on my stomach, 108; kicks on my shoulders, 80. I was led, bound with cords by the hair, 24 times; spits in the face were 180; I was beaten on the body 6666 times; beaten on the head, 110 times. I was roughly pushed, and at 12 o'clock was lifted up by the hair; pricked with thorns and pulled by the beard 23 times; received 20 wounds on the head; thorns of marine junks, 72; pricks of thorns in the head, 110; mortal thorns in the forehead, 3. I was afterwards flogged and dressed as a mocked king; wounds in the body, 1000. The soldiers who led me to the Calvary were 608; those who watched me were 3, and those who mocked me were 1008; the drops of blood which I lost were 28,430."

Blessed Items in General

The range of objects that come under the influence of the Church's blessing is as comprehensive as the spiritual and temporal interests of her children. All the lower creatures have been made to serve man and minister to his needs. As nothing, then, should be left undone to enhance their utility towards this end, they are placed in a way under the direct providence of "Every creature of God is good," as St. Paul says, "for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." There is also the reflection that the effects of the Fall extended to the inanimate objects of creation, marring in a manner the original aim of their existence and making them, in the hands of evil spirits, ready instruments for the perpetration of iniquity.

In the Epistle to the Romans St. Paul describes inanimate nature, blighted by the primal curse, groaning in travail and anxiously awaiting its deliverance from bondage. "The expectation of the creature waiteth for the revelation of the Sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that made it subject, in hope." From this it will be easily seen how very reasonable is the anxiety of the Church that the things which are use in daily life and particularly in the service of religion, should be rescued from contaminating influences and endowed with a potency for good. The great treasury of ecclesiastical blessings is the Roman Ritual.

The value of a blessing given by a private person in his own name will be commensurate with his acceptableness before God by reason of his individual merits and sanctity. A blessing, on the other hand, imparted with the sanction of the Church has all the weight of

authority that reaches to the voice of her who is the well-beloved spouse of Christ, pleading on behalf of her children. The whole efficacy, therefore, of these benedictions, in so far as they are liturgical and ecclesiastical, is derived from the prayers and invocations of the Church made in her name by her ministers.

Blessings may be divided into two classes, viz: invocative and constitutive. The former are those in which the Divine benignity is invoked on persons or things, to bring down upon them some temporal or spiritual good without changing their former condition. Of this kind are the blessings given to children, and to articles of food. The latter class are so called because they permanently depute persons or things to Divine service by imparting to them some sacred character, by which they assume a new and distinct spiritual relationship. Such are the blessings given churches and chalices by their consecration. In this case a certain abiding quality of sacredness is conferred in virtue of which the persons or things blessed become inviolably sacred so that they cannot be divested of their religious character or be turned to profane uses.

Again, theologians distinguish blessings of an intermediate sort, by which things are rendered special instruments of salvation without at the same time becoming irrevocably sacred, such as blessed salt, candles, wheat, incense, beans on the Feast of St. Joseph, etc. Blessings are not sacraments; they are not of Divine institution; they do not confer sanctifying grace; and they do not produce their effects in virtue of the rite itself, or *ex opere operanto*. They are sacramentals and, as such, they produce the following specific effects:

1. Excitation of pious emotions and affections of the heart and, by means of these, remission of venial sin and of the temporal punishment due to it.
2. Freedom from power of evil spirits;
3. Preservation and restoration of bodily health.
4. Various other benefits, temporal or spiritual.

All these effects are not necessarily inherent in any one blessing; some are caused by one formula, and others by another, according to the intentions of the Church. Neither are these effects to be regarded as infallibly produced, except in so far as impetration of the Church has this attribute. The religious veneration, therefore, in which the faithful regard blessings has no faint of superstition, since it depends altogether on the Church's suffrages offered to God that the persons using the things she blesses may derive from them certain supernatural advantages. Instances are alleged in the lives of the saints where miracles have been wrought by the blessings of holy men and women. There is no reason to limit the miraculous interference of God to the early ages of the Church's history, and the Church never

accepts these wonderful occurrences unless the evidence in support of their authenticity is absolutely unimpeachable.